

NEWS RELEASE



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OPELOUSAS, LOUISIANA MAN PLEADS GUILTY TO FEMA FRAUD CHARGE

Man files disaster relief claim for property that did not exist

Lafayette, Louisiana . . . United States Attorney Donald W. Washington announced that **LAWRENCE CHRISTOPHER JOHNSON, a/k/a LEWIENCE JOHNSON**, age 19, from Opelousas, Louisiana pled guilty this week in federal court before United States District Judge Richard T. Haik to making a false claim. JOHNSON's plea comes one week before the date he was scheduled to be tried by a jury.

JOHNSON was indicted in July 2006 following an investigation by the U.S. Postal Service. Sentencing will be scheduled for a later date to be determined by the court. JOHNSON faces a maximum penalty of five (5) years imprisonment.

In pleading guilty, JOHNSON admitted that in September 2005, he registered for Disaster Assistance from FEMA following Hurricane Katrina. During the registration process, JOHNSON claimed

that Hurricane Katrina caused damage to his primary residence located at 5821 Wall Street in New Orleans, Louisiana. As a result, FEMA mailed a \$2,000 check to JOHNSON for assistance with food, shelter, clothing, and moving expenses.

After investigating JOHNSON's claim, U.S. Postal Inspectors determined that the damaged address claimed by JOHNSON did not exist. Therefore, JOHNSON was never entitled to the \$2,000 he received from FEMA.

Sentencing in federal court is determined by the discretion of federal judges and the governing statute. United States Sentencing Guidelines established by the United States Congress and the United States Sentencing Commission are only guidelines for the judge. Parole has been abolished in the federal system.

This case is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Howard C. Parker.

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